

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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R 180530Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9219

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PDIP PFOR PINT NZ

SUBJECT: HUGH WATT NAMED HIGH COMMISSIONER TO LONDON

1. PRIME MINISTER ROWLING HAS ANNOUNCED APPOINTMENT OF HUGH WATT AS GNZ HIGH COMMISSIONER IN LONDON. ANNOUNCEMENT, MADE BY ROWLING IN LONDON, HAS BEEN EXPECTED SINCE RECENT RESIGNATION OF PREVIOUS HIGH COMMISSIONER T H MCCOMBS. WATT WILL RESIGN HIS PORTFOLIO AS MINISTER OF WORKS AND DEVELOPMENT, BUT NO DECISION HAS BEEN MADE WITH REGARD TO PARLIAMENTARY SEAT. POSSIBILITY EXISTS HE MAY RETAIN SEAT AS WELL AS RANK OF MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO.

2. APPOINTMENT OF WATT, WHO WAS DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER IN KIRK GOVERNMENT, IS MEANT TO EMPHASIZE IMPORTANCE GNZ ATTACHES TO RELATIONS WITH UK. HE IS AN INFLUENTIAL MEMBER OF THE LABOUR PARTY AND, AS CABINET "OLD BOY", IS IN EXCELLENT POSITION TO REPRESENT GNZ. TIMING OF WATT'S ARRIVAL IN LONDON NOT YET DECIDED.

3. IN ADDITION TO DEPUTY PRIME MINISTERSHIP AND WORKS PORTFOLIO WATT WAS ALSO MINISTER OF LABOR IN KIRK GOVERNMENT. MULTIPLICITY OF JOBS LED TO POOR OVERALL PERFORMANCE WHICH, IN TURN, RESULTED IN WATT'S FAILURE TO BECOME PRIME
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MINISTER ON KIRK'S DEATH. THE ABOVE NOTWITHSTANDING,

EMBASSY HAS BEEN IMPRESSED WITH WATT'S POLITICAL FINESSE
AND FORCE ON OCCASIONS WHEN WE HAVE REQUESTED HIS
ASSISTANCE.

4. WATT'S DEPARTURE FROM CABINET WILL LEAVE IMPORTANT
WORKS AND DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO UP FOR GRABS. PM ROWLING
HAS ANNOUNCED FROM LONDON THAT DECISION CONCERNING JOB
WILL BE MADE SHORTLY AFTER HIS MARCH 6 RETURN TO WELLINGTON.
LIKELIHOOD IS THAT ADDITIONAL MINISTER WILL BE BROUGHT
INTO CABINET FOLLOWING WHICH THERE WILL BE MINOR CABINET
SHUFFLE. FOUR STRONGEST CONTENDERS TO ENTER CABINET
ARE PARLIAMENTARY UNDERSECRETARIES E E ISBEY
(TRANSPORTATION), B G CARCLAY (AGRICULTURE), B P
MACDONNELL (TRADE AND INDUSTRY), AND CHAIRMAN OF
COMMITTEES J L HUNT. SHOULD WATT BE NAMED MINISTER
WITHOUT PORTFOLIO RESHUFFLE WILL PROBABLY TAKE PLACE
WITHOUT ADDITION OF NEW MAN TO CABINET RANKS.
SELDEN

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To: STATE
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